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ABSTRACT

The umbrella associations from all 12 member states of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) approved a Joint Opinion on Education and Training that lays down a series of principles important for the development of future European Community vocational training policy. A document was issued as a follow-up to an earlier meeting on the importance of the revitalization of social dialog. The Joint Opinion on Training and Education can be viewed on two separate planes: first, it sets out and expresses the progress achieved in forming a view shared by the social partners in regard to the general principles concerning education and training and their importance for a united Europe; and second, it defines common guidelines to be adopted by European management and labor in promoting quality in education and training systems. The Joint Opinion stresses the importance of both basic training and retraining in order to equip participants with qualifications recognized in the labor market. It also stresses the importance of involving the social partners in the preparation and implementation of various programs of action of the European Community. (The text of the Joint Opinion is included in this report.) (KC)

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First results of the social dialogue in the field of education and training

On 26 January 1990, the umbrella associations of the social partners from all twelve EC Member States approved a Joint Opinion on Education and Training. In this Joint Opinion the member associations and organisations of the European Associations of Workers (Employers' Liaison Committee (ELC), the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE) and the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP)) have laid down a whole series of principles. We are pointing them out because of their probable importance for the development of future Community vocational training policy (cf. Annex I)

The Social Dialogue Steering Group, made up of senior officials of ETUC, UNICE and CEEP and chaired by Mrs Vasso PAPANDREOU, Member of the Commission with special responsibility for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth, met in Brussels on 26 January, one year after the meeting of 12 January 1989 which, at Mr Delors' initiative, gave a fresh impetus to the "social dialogue". As a first assessment of the revitalization of the "social dialogue", all the parties stressed its importance. Mrs Papandreou stated that it represented an important forum which provided an opportunity for the two sides of industry to exchange views on crucial questions of economic and social content in an effort to create a strengthened Europe in terms of competition, social composition and solidarity. All the parties reaffirmed their commitment to this process, which would take the form of a search for solutions based on consensus.

The Steering Group expressed its approval of the **Joint Opinion on Training and Education**, finalized on 3 October 1989 by a Joint Working Party. This Joint Opinion should be viewed on two separate planes.

- firstly, it sets out and expresses the progress achieved in forming a common view shared by the social partners as to the general principles concerning education and training and their importance for a united Europe,
- secondly, it defines common guidelines to be adopted by European management and labour in promoting quality education and training systems.

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The Joint Opinion stresses the importance of both basic training and retraining as a means of improving competitiveness among community firms and increasing prosperity for all wage-earners in the Community. In this context emphasis has been placed, firstly, on basic education and an initial qualifying period of quality vocational training available to all young people with a view to ensuring them the best working opportunities and, secondly, on appropriate measures to facilitate the transition between school and the world of work, notably by means of apprenticeships and training-cum-work schemes. Furthermore, it is essential to take into account the needs and aspirations of workers to improve and perfect their knowledge and skills, whilst giving special attention to retraining for certain social and vocational categories of workers in the toughest situation as regards the labour market, notably unskilled workers, women, migrant workers, disabled persons and the long-term unemployed. It is accordingly important to increase investment in training and significantly improve access to training by mobilizing all available means, whether in respect of training organized on the firms' initiative, in response to personal development needs or in relation to a vocational scheme involving the employees. Lastly, the Joint Opinion establishes the principle that the employer shall inform and consult employees and their representatives concerning training programmes organized by the firm and that employers and workers shall be involved in drawing up educational and vocational training policies and programmes. In this context, the two sides of industry also insist that their views be taken into account in the preparation by regions or government authorities of official training programmes, and notably in the case of programmes co-financed by the structural funds.

The Steering Group therefore called on the "Training and Education" Working Group to continue its work on the basis of broader terms of reference and instructed it to examine closely two questions: **(1) the transition of young people from school to work and their initial training and (2) the participation of the two sides of industry in Community programmes.**

The Steering Group also conducted a preliminary evaluation of the steps to be taken after the elaboration of Joint Opinions in order to ensure wider distribution throughout the Community and, above all, among the two sides of industry in each of the Member States in the interest of ensuring that the Opinions can be used as a reference framework for the national negotiators at the appropriate levels. It was agreed that the Opinions must be very widely distributed and used by the Member States at national level and at sectoral level on the basis of flexible arrangements to be determined by the two sides of industry. In this context, the decentralization of the Joint Opinions at sectoral and branch level, particularly those most sensitive to the impact of the large market, was the subject of discussions which it was decided to pursue subsequently in greater detail.

The individual procedures and quality yardsticks to be used to implement these principles have still to be developed. CEDEFOP has already made some specialist contributions to this. However, these have to be combined with concrete analyses of requirements and politically backed goals in the medium term.

Of course, the Joint Opinion of 26.1.1990 constitutes a sound basis for the further extension of this work. For many years now CEDEFOP has been offering its services in order to achieve progress in the social dialogue in this field: both through its continuous technical support of the Commission in the preparation and evaluation of meetings with the social partners but also through studies (cf. Annex 2) and colloquia approved by the CEDEFOP Management Board. Between 1989 and 1992 small colloquia are to take place in all Member States which will be attended by the members of the Management Board concerned. At these colloquia current details of cooperation

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with the social partners will be discussed and documented. CEDEFOP will report on these meetings in its FLASH. The CEDEFOP FLASH SPECIAL and CEDEFOP NEWS, in a completely new form, will provide information on particularly positive examples of the social dialogue at national, sectoral and regional levels in future.

At European level the social partners wish to concentrate on two main themes in accordance with their decision of 26.1.1990:

- improving initial vocational training in order to equip participants with qualifications recognised on the labour market;
- involving the social partners in the preparation and implementation of various programmes of action of the EC, and the project and programmes called for by the European Social Fund.

In 1990 the Working Group "Education and Training" is to meet at least three times in order to discuss the above mentioned topics. It will receive assistance from the EC Commission (Task Force: Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth) in 1990.

flash

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Brussels, 26 January 1990 - final

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

JOINT OPINION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

PREAMBLE

In view of the vital role played by education and training in the strategy for the completion of the internal market, including its social dimension, as well as in the process of European integration, the participants consider it important to deal in greater depth with the subject of education and initial and continuing vocational training by enlarging on the Joint Opinion delivered on 6 March 1987.

They declare their agreement on the following general principles :

(a) High-quality basic education and vocational training are essential if the citizens of the Member States of the Community are to meet the new challenges and take advantage of the new opportunities. They are real investments. The future of the Community depends on the skills and performance of its working population.

(b) Appropriate basic training and retraining will provide them with the skills necessary to :

- contribute to economic efficiency by improving the competitiveness of European companies;
- develop, master and exploit new technologies;
- take advantage of opportunities which arise;
- promote their development and the prosperity of entreprises and employees to the advantage of all in the Community.

(c) The development and adoption of new tech[illegible] is important for the economic progress and wellbeing of the [illegible]ommunity and will be economically more viable and socially more acceptable if accompanied by effective training.

(d) Structural adjustment and the completion of the internal market will set major challenges in terms of skill requirements. The shortages and mismatches of skills which are already making themselves felt threaten to become more acute. Managing these changes necessitates the qualitative improvement and updating of skill requirements and the adaptation of qualifications structures.

(e) The intensification of efforts in the field of vocational education and training is in the interest of both firms and workers and demands a commitment on the part of all parties concerned.

In this spirit, the participants have issued the following Joint Opinion :

BASIC EDUCATION AND INITIAL TRAINING

1. High-quality education and initial vocational training leading to recognized qualifications are essential and irreplaceable if young people are to be successfully integrated into working and economic life and if they are to continue to develop, notably by means of continuing training.

   Broadening the provision of initial training leading to recognized qualifications and adapted to the present and future needs of firms, workers and society in general would provide the opportunity to make considerable improvements to the employment prospects of young people and the efficiency of workers and firms whilst reducing the threat of youth unemployment.

2. The education authorities should be encouraged to take whatever measures may be necessary before the end of compulsory education in order to facilitate the transition from school to working life. Measures should be promoted to give all school leavers completing compulsory full-time education access to initial vocational training of a type which provides genuine qualifications recognized under the qualifications systems of the Member States. Except in cases where the employers and/or other organizations agree to take measures themselves in accordance with national and local rules and practices, these measures should be implemented under the general responsibility of the public authorities, who should take into consideration the views of the social partners at the appropriate level.

   The quality of initial vocational training should provide the necessary general basis to enable young people to develop their capacities to take initiative, to learn and to engage in entrepreneurial activity, improve their preparation for technological training, and promote the learning of at least one other Community language in addition to their mother tongue.

   The participants emphasize the importance which they attach to apprenticeships and other systems of training, to combined work and training schemes, and to training based on standards leading to recognized qualifications which can help to build new bridges between schools and working life and promote the integration of young people into working life. The provision of training should be improved in terms of both quantity and quality so as to meet the specific requirements of young people and therefore to be attractive to them.

3. Initial vocational training must be accessible to all young people. A positive correlation is to be seen between occupational ability and the success of the firm : occupational ability demands long term preparation. Further efforts should be made to assist unemployed young people and those whose basic training has been

inadequate so as to provide them with individually-tailored vocational guidance and help to remotivate them.

Special measures will have to be introduced to :

- help young people who have not been able to acquire at school the qualifications needed to prepare for an occupation or trade;

- enable those young people who have grown up outside their country of origin to acquire the basic training they need to find a job;

- help the disabled to enter the labour market;

- help unemployed young people to enter or re-enter the labour market.

Basic training courses of short duration should lead, in stages, to qualifications recognized by the training systems.

3a. Policies promoting equal opportunities for men and women and, in particular, the participation of women in all training schemes, especially those linked to the occupations of the future, should be developed, and specific measures should be devised as regards training for occupations in which women are underrepresented. Special attention should be given to measures facilitating the access of young women to the whole range of available training opportunities.

Both men and women should be encouraged to choose careers that break with the traditional division of tasks.

4. The participants consider that taking into account national practices, the employers, the employees and/or their representative organizations should be consulted in the planning and implementation of education and vocational training policies and programmes. At Community level they already play an important role in this field in accordance with established procedures. They

should be associated in measures to promote the recognition and the comparability of qualifications at Community level.

4a. The participants consider that in addition to their functions of providing a broad general education and basic training for life in society, all the parties should contribute in such a way that, schools take greater account of the realities of working life. Close links between firms and education establishments should be encouraged so as to promote the more effective integration of young people into working life.

4b. Special attention should be devoted to the training of teachers and instructors while ensuring that they are trained in sufficient numbers each year and that their training is of a high standard. In the same way, appropriate training apparatus and methods should be developed and the quality of training arrangements should be improved. Increased efforts should be made to encourage teachers and instructors to take part in exchange schemes and practical training, to familiarise teachers with the latest developments put into effect in firms, new technologies, and to develop the theoretical training and teaching skills of instructors in firms.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ADULT TRAINING

5. Vocational training to meet the needs of the firm throughout a person's working life is the shared responsibility of employer and employee.

If this is to be effective, company and individual needs must be clearly identified and planned in training plans or programmes appropriate to the size of the firm and drawn up in the framework of the firm's overall strategy. They should aim to develop the individual, to enhance his skills and assist him or her to adapt to changes in jobs.

in this context, it is essential that account be taken of the needs of workers to improve their skills in line with the requirements of heir job or in readiness for changes within the firm and of present and anticipated requirements of the firm.

Vocational training should be encouraged according to the opportunities available and the nature of the needs to be satisfied. This should be achieved by various means : training plans, authorization of leave, adapted programmes, cooperation between organizations, tax inducements and the use of modern communication facilities.

Training courses of short duration should lead, in stages, to broader and additional qualifications.

6. Training programmes are drawn up in response to a variety of initiatives emanating from the individual employee himself, the employers, the workers' representatives, the occupational organizations, the sector, region or State concerned. The responsibility of each of these parties and therefore the corresponding obligations depend on the aim pursued. The training of employees should be taken into account in the development of their career and working life as one of the criteria determining their qualifications and performance. The sectors and sub-sectors have a role to play in the promotion of continuing vocational training.

The planning of public training programmes by the regions or the State should take into account the views of the social partners at the appropriate level so as to avoid duplication of efforts and arrive at the most effective combinations, especially in the context of the integrated training programmes financed by the Structural Funds.

7. Information and consultation of employees and their representatives undertaken by employers in accordance with national laws and practices, on training programmes put into effect by the firm, would help to increase the motivation of the work force by improving their understanding of the changes facing the firm.

8. The participants consider that special attention should be paid to certain problems concerning the occupational integration and retraining of adults, in particular :

   - the least qualified workers;

   - small and medium-sized enterprises;

   - men and women experiencing difficulties in re-entering the labour market;

   - migrant workers and their children;

   - ethnic minorities;

   - disabled people;

   - long term unemployed.

9. The participants consider that the social partners should cooperate at the appropriate level in the planning and implementation of national and Community training programmes and reaffirm their support for the existing Community training programmes relating to : the occupational integration of young people (ESF - Objective N°4 of the Structural Policy and PETRA), language training (LINGUA), training in new information technologies (EUROTECNET) and cooperation between universities and enterprises in the field of initial and continuing training in the technological sphere (COMETT).

They consider that exchanges of ideas and experience in these fields with the representative employers' and employees' organizations of the EFTA countries have been useful in the past and should be maintained.

10. The participants call on the Community to present with the help of existing mechanisms, the relevant information needed to determine the costs of training in the Community and practical arrangements in the Member States so that a comparison can be made between the situation in the Community and in other parts of the world.

Furthermore, the Commission should provide the information necessary for examining the terms of access of workers of each Member State to training schemes available in the other Member States.

11. The participants call for every step to be taken to facilitate the broadest possible access to training opportunities. The practical arrangements for such access will have to be specified according to the relevant circumstances.

Continuing vocational training decided on by firms in the light of their needs should be financed by employers. The full cost of this training carried out either within firms or outside should be deductible for tax purposes.

Without prejudice to existing agreements and practices, the arrangements for employees to be granted time off for training purposes should, if the parties consider it appropriate, be the subject of an agreement between the employer and the employee and/or his or her representatives in the framework of national laws and practices.

12. Any employee wishing to follow a course of training of his or her choice which corresponds to a need for self-fulfilment and to his

or her own professionnal career development should be assisted to do so by means of training courses financed by public funds or tax deductions and/or in the framework of arrangements provided for by national legislation.

In this context, the request for leave will be considered in accordance with the laws and practices in the Member States and/or in firms.

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